

## June 01: Global Day of Parents

**Global Day of Parents** (June 01<sup>st</sup>) honors parents. It is time for taking stock ...to realize the selfless lifelong commitment of parents in the nurturing and protecting children, in the harmonious development of their personality, and in creating the family environment - an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.

The world commemorates various observances to consolidate the bonds between members of the family, the basic social unit consisting of emotionally supportive great-grandparents, grandparents, parents and their children, whether dwelling together or not. Amongst others, are:

**Mother's Day** (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of May) in over 96 countries, honors the mother of the family, as well as motherhood, maternal bonds, and the influence of mothers in society.

**International Day of Families** (May 15) highlights the importance of families as basic units of society as well as its concern regarding their situation around the world.

**Sibling's Day** (May 31), as Brothers and Sisters Day in some countries honors the relationships of siblings.

**Father's Day** (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of June), is a civic celebration in over 90 countries, complements Mother's Day and honors fathers and male parenting.

Others days commemorating human relationships include:

**Grandparents Day** (on various dates across the world): ...to sensitize the youth in the community about the important contributions of seniors throughout history ...to "adopt" a grandparent, not just for one day a year, but rather for a lifetime ...for grandparents/great-grandparents and grandchildren/great-grandchildren to spend to spend quality time in enjoyable activities ...to strengthen the bond between the generations ...and to increase respect and appreciation for elderly parents general.

**World Senior Citizen's Day** (August 21<sup>st</sup>) & **International Day of Older Persons** (October 1<sup>st</sup>) to raise awareness about social, health & economic issues affecting the elderly, as well as to support them, recognize their achievements and contributions to society.

To mark these observances, people raise awareness through social media, news stories, and special community gatherings inviting senior citizens, their relatives, friends and volunteers sharing symbolic gifts and having meals together. Unfortunately, these observances are often outweighed by massive spending on emotionless gifts, lunches and dinners.

We need to tailor down to tangible, immaterial and real commemoration which includes enjoying time with them, acquiescing and honoring their presence in our lives, not on one-day-a-year, but for a lifetime!

ओ३म् सहृदयं सामनस्यमविद्वेषं कृणोम वः । अन्यो अन्यमभि हयत वत्सं जातमिवाघ्न्या ॥

*Om Sahridayam saamanasyam-avidvesham krinomi vah, Anyo anyamabhi haryata vatsam jaatam-iva-aghnyaa.* (Atharva Veda 3.30.1)

A community where all are like-hearted, like-minded and bear no hatred/jealousy, will bring to each other and to all inviolable love, like that showered by the mother cow unto its calf.

The Vedic formulations of daily service and respect to living parents and grandparents (*Pitri Yajnya*) as well as learned persons and guests (*Atithi Yajnya*) are evergreen models for harmonious community



living. The overarching principle requires that we need to be truthful to our duties and responsibilities: (i) as students, we be dedicated to acquire the highest learning; (ii) as spouses, we be faithful to each other and serve as role models to their children; (iii) as retirees, we consolidate our spiritual knowledge, share life experiences and empower the younger generation to be assertive in their roles; and (iv) ultimately, we move to renunciation of worldly bonds and engage in meditation, contemplation and spreading true knowledge.

‘*Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*’ spells out that the world is but one family. To achieve this, we need to understand the foundations of a family. A young man and lady with like characters, actions and temperament unite to “start a family”. Agglomerations of families constitute a society, a village, a town, a country and finally the world.

A family includes the wider group of relatives. It also refers to the association of people who share common beliefs or activities. The scientific term family is a classification of different organisms based on common features.

We are only amending the sense of family ...the more things change, the more things are very similar.

*Sangachchadvam samvadadhvam...* (RigVeda 10.191.02) reminds us that unity and solidarity at all levels across families, communities up to the global village rests on the pillars of harmonious thoughts, speech and the shouldering of responsibilities.

These observances (Global Day of Parents, Mother’s Day, International Day of Families, etc.) all remind us of the need to create a closely-knitted society where each member lives a life of dignity. To succeed, we need to live the time-tested universal human values (*Dharma*) not as a flash show but rather integrate them to ordinary life.

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